

# CHADO-HAMITIC "ADIEU" NEW THOUGHTS ON CHADIC LANGUAGE CLASSIFICATION(\*)

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Forty years ago Professor Dr. J. Lukas introduced the term "Chado-Hamitic" to describe a group of languages spoken in the Lake Chad area of the western Sudan characterized by Hamitic-like features<sup>(1)</sup>. The group was divided into three subgroups, major representatives of each subgroup being Hausa in the West, Kotoko (Logone) in the centre, and Mubi in the east. The group as a whole was distinguished from another group of languages spoken in the same general area consisting of Mandara, Margi, Tera etc., referred to at first as the "Mandara" group and later as "Chadic". This opposition between "Chado-Hamitic" and "Chadic" became firmly established in the literature in the early 1950's with the presentation of this classification in the Handbook of African Languages<sup>(2)</sup>.

While the Handbook was being published, Professor Greenberg's series of articles on African language classification began to appear. In his article on Hamito-Semitic<sup>(3)</sup>, he advanced the opinion that the languages falling in Lukas' two groups really belonged to one and the same family, for which the term CHADIC has now become standard. While Greenberg's position was not seriously disputed, scholars working in the area nevertheless continued to operate in terms of the "Chado-Hamitic"/"Chadic" dichotomy. In fact one finds an anomalous situation whereby the basic unity of the CHADIC family has been known

(\*) Research on Kotoko and Chadic classification has been supported by a National Science Foundation grant GS-56139. I am also indebted to Ahmadu Bello University for providing me with a travel grant to attend this congress.

(1) See especially J. Lukas, *Hamitisches Sprachgut im Sudan*, ZDMG 90 (1936), pp. 579-588, and J. Lukas, *The Linguistic Situation in the Lake Chad Area in Central Africa*, "Africa" 9 (1936), pp. 332-349. The first use of the term "Chado-Hamitic" is to be found in J. Lukas, *Die Gliederung der Sprachenwelt des Tschadsee-Gebietes in Zentralafrika*, "Forschungen und Fortschritte" 10 (29) (1934), pp. 356-357. A comprehensive bibliography of the Chadic family is given in P. Newman, *A Chadic Language Bibliography (Excluding Hausa)*, JAL 10 (1) (1971), pp. 101-109.

(2) D. Westermann and M. A. Bryan, *The Languages of West Africa*, London, Handbook of African Languages, Part 2 (1952).

(3) *Studies in African Linguistic Classification*. IV Hamito-Semitic, "Southwest. Journal of Anthro." 6 (1950), pp. 47-63.

for over twenty years while the term "Chado-Hamitic" has remained in use up to the present day. As examples of the continued use of this term during the past decade we can cite H. Jungraithmayr's *Beobachtungen zur tschadohamitischen Sprache der Jegu (und Jonkor) von Abu Telfan* (1961-1962)<sup>(4)</sup>, J. Lukas' *Tschado-hamitische Sprachproben aus Nordnigerien* [Karekare- und Bolanci-Texte] (1966)<sup>(5)</sup>, and most recently H. Jungraithmayr's excellent grammar, *Die Ron-Sprachen. Tschadohamitische Studien in Nordnigerien* (1970)<sup>(6)</sup>.

The position I would like to take here is that the term "Chado-Hamitic" is an inaccurate and misleading term and should be dispensed with immediately and completely. Let me emphasize from the start, however, that my objection to the term "Chado-Hamitic" is not based on petty matters of nomenclature, but rather follows naturally out of substantive issues concerning classification within the CHADIC family. That is to say, while the specific aim of this paper is the elimination of an anachronistic term, the essence of the paper is a consideration of recent thoughts about CHADIC subclassification.

The way we will proceed is by asking the following question. When scholars in the 1970's use the term "Chado-Hamitic", what meaning, if any, do they attach to the term, i. e. to what linguistic reality does this term refer and what substantive claims are implied by its use?

1. The first possibility is that the term "Chado-Hamitic" is intended to refer to Lukas' original group of the same name, taken as a family in its own right distinct from the "Chadic" family. Whether anyone in fact still adheres to this viewpoint is very unlikely. In 1950 when Greenberg first published his study of Hamito-Semitic, the languages of northern Nigeria, northern Cameroon, and the Chad Republic were very poorly known. Moreover, the evidence he presented for collapsing "Chado-Hamitic" and "Chadic" into a single family was not necessarily convincing on the face of it. Since that time, however, the situation has noticeably changed. While our knowledge is still meagre by the standards of scholarship in the Semitic field, for example, we can at least now claim good quality, reliable descriptions of quite a large number of languages covering a wide selection of groups and subgroups with the CHADIC family. We can also claim the beginnings of comparative work and attempts at historical reconstruction, starting with Newman and Ma's 1966 article on CHADIC phonology and lexicon<sup>(7)</sup> and leading to more sophisticated work such as Schuh's comparative

(4) "Afrika und Übersee" 45, pp. 95-123.

(5) *Neue afrikanistische Studien*, ed. by J. Lukas, pp. 173-207.

(6) Glückstadt: "Afrikanistische Forschungen" 3.

(7) P. Newman and R. Ma, *Comparative Chadic: Phonology and Lexicon*, JAL 5, pp. 218-251.



study of emphasis<sup>(8)</sup> or my own recent reconstruction of Proto-CHADIC verb classes<sup>(9)</sup>. Given the great advances in CHADIC research of the past ten years I think that it is fair to say that the unity of CHADIC as a language family is now a fact rather than a theory. Whatever "Chado-Hamitic" is, it is certainly not a separate family in its own right. Interesting, a look at Lukas' recent grammar of Gisiga<sup>(10)</sup>, a "Chadic" language in his original sense, reveals as many references to and comparisons with "Chado-Hamitic" languages as with other "Chadic" languages, thereby suggesting that Professor Lukas himself has come to acknowledge the fundamental relationship between his two groups.

2. A second possibility is that "Chado-Hamitic" is intended to refer to Lukas' original group of that name, thought of not as a separate family but rather as a co-ordinate branch within CHADIC. The claim implied by this usage is that the internal composition of "Chado-Hamitic" and its status as a *bona fide* group are valid, notwithstanding the wider membership of this group as a whole within the CHADIC family. Were this claim correct, then objections to the use of the term "Chado-Hamitic" would be simply terminological. But this is not the case. The "Chado-Hamitic" group as described by Lukas in the Handbook is constructed on an unsound basis and cannot be sustained even as an internal grouping. If one compares the classification in the Handbook (based on a mixture of historical and typological criteria) with the classificatory framework offered by Newman and Ma<sup>(11)</sup>, and expanded by Hoffmann<sup>(12)</sup>, one finds that Lukas' "Chado-Hamitic" contains serious errors both of omission and of commission. For example, the Angas and Ron languages of the Jos Plateau, which are clearly related to Hausa, Bole, Bade, etc., were explicitly excluded from the "Chado-Hamitic" group in the Handbook and classified as "Non-Class Languages". Conversely, Kotoko, Musgu, and Masa were incorrectly included within the "Chado-Hamitic" group when their true ties are with "Chadic" languages such as Mandara, Margi, Tera, etc.

The case of Kotoko is particularly significant with regard to the question of "Chado-Hamitic". From the time of Lukas' earliest writings on the subject, Kotoko, Hausa, and Mubi stood as the key languages upon which the concept

(8) R. G. Schuh, *Reconstruction of the Syntax of Subject Emphasis in Certain Chadic Languages*, "Studies in African Linguistics", Supplement 2 (1971), pp. 67-77.

(9) P. Newman, *Proto-Chadic Verb Classes*, "Folia Orientalia" 16 (1975), pp. 65-84.

(10) *Studien zur Sprache der Gisiga (Nordkamerun)*, "Afrikanistische Forschungen" 4 (1970), Glückstadt/Hamburg.

(11) P. Newman and R. Ma, *op. cit.*

(12) C. Hoffmann, *Provisional Check List of Chadic Languages*, "Chadic Newsletter", Marburg, 1971.

of a "Chado-Hamitic" family was developed. The discovery that Kotoko does not in fact belong in this group thus cannot be dismissed as a mere correction in detail; rather, the reclassification of Kotoko must be recognized as a major refutation of the whole "Chado-Hamitic" idea. Since the evidence justifying this reclassification has not yet been published, let me affirm — based on my own Kotoko research still in progress — that there is no doubt but that the extraction of Kotoko from the "Chado-Hamitic" group is correct. The closer connection of Kotoko with Lukas' "Chadic" group is amply evidenced by a number of factors including specific phonological correspondences, uniquely shared lexical items, higher percentage of cognates on a standard list, and detailed similarities in verb forms and verb classes.

In short, given the inadequacies indicated above we must conclude that the "Chado-Hamitic" group as conceived by Lukas does not constitute a valid linguistic grouping at any level and thus cannot serve as the referent for the ever persistent sobriquet.

3. A third possible interpretation of the term "Chado-Hamitic", as now used, is that it is meant to be a notational equivalent of "Plateau-Sahel", a term coined by Newman and Ma to refer to one of two co-ordinate branches of CHADIC (the other branch being called "Biu-Mandara"). The Newman and Ma classification, which was subsequently expanded and made more comprehensive by Hoffmann, was intended as an improvement both on Lukas' and Greenberg's treatment of the internal structure of the CHADIC family. Lukas' fallacious "Chado-Hamitic"/"Chadic" distinction was rejected (along the lines indicated in the previous section) while Greenberg's hyper-fragmentary nine subgroups were coalesced into two branches to give a more accurate picture of the nature and degree of relationship existing between the various subgroups. The allocation of Greenberg's nine subgroups either to Plateau-Sahel or to Biu-Mandara was done as follows:

Plateau-Sahel: G1 (Hausa, Bade, etc.) + G9 (Mubi, Nancere, etc.).

Biu-Mandara: G2 (Kotoko) + G3 (Margi-Tera) + G4 (Matakam) + G5 (Gidar) + G6 (Mandara) + G7 (Musgu) + G8 (Masa).

Contrasted with the classification in the Handbook, the composition of the two branches can be specified in the following terms:

Plateau-Sahel: The original "Chado-Hamitic" family + Angas and Ron languages + Mubi-Nancere group + Warji and S. Bauchi languages, minus Kotoko, Musgu and Masa.

Biu-Mandara: The original "Chadic" family + Kotoko, Musgu, and Masa + a certain number of languages not then known.

If "Chado-Hamitic" is now being used to refer to the Plateau-Sahel branch of CHADIC with its presently understood composition — and in many cases no other interpretation seems possible — we must ask whether this usage is appropriate. I would insist that it is not, and for a number of different reasons. To



begin with, there is the indisputable fact that the membership of the Plateau-Sahel branch is really quite different from that of the original "Chado-Hamitic" family. Plateau-Sahel is not simply Lukas' "Chado-Hamitic" under another name, but a new and different group built upon Greenberg's nine subgroups without reference to the old "Chado-Hamitic"/"Chadic" opposition.

From a terminological point of view, moreover, there is a big difference between "Plateau-Sahel" and the better-known term "Chado-Hamitic" that would disqualify the latter as a reasonable designation for the branch. One must remember that "Chado-Hamitic" (unlike "Plateau-Sahel") was never intended as a semantically neutral, arbitrary label. Rather, the term was meant to highlight the fact that the languages in this group were characterized by linguistic features reminiscent of the Hamito-Semitic family as contrasted with the "Chadic" languages where these Hamitic-like features were not supposed to occur. The division of CHADIC into Plateau-Sahel and Biu-Mandara, on the other hand, embodies no such claims about the presence or absence of Hamitic features. Most of the so-called Hamitic features listed by Lukas in his classic article, *Der Hamitische Gehalt der Tschadohamitischen Sprachen*<sup>(13)</sup> can be found in Biu-Mandara as well as in Plateau-Sahel, e. g. the ejective sounds (Kotoko [BM] and Warji [PS]); phonemic vowel length (Ga'anda [BM] and Kanakuru [PS]); importance of ablaut (Tera [BM] and Bole [PS]); grammatical gender (Bata [BM] and Ron-Bokkos [PS]); plural formations such as internal *a*-plural (Kotoko [BM] and Hausa [PS]). Plateau-Sahel is no more Hamitic in essence than is Biu-Mandara; a name that implies otherwise thus should be avoided. The significance of the Hamitic-like features in CHADIC lies not in questions of internal subgrouping but rather in what these features can tell us about the external relationship of CHADIC as a whole to the larger Hamito-Semitic (Afroasiatic) superfamily.

As if the above factors were not sufficient, there is possibly an even more serious objection to using the Plateau-Sahel branch as referent for the term "Chado-Hamitic", namely, the questionable status of the branch itself! Plateau-Sahel was created in the 1966 Newman and Ma article by combining Greenberg's group 1 (Hausa, Bole, Bade, etc.) with his group 9 (Mubi, Dangla, Nancere, etc.) into a single branch considered to be at the same level and co-ordinate with the Biu-Mandara branch, which contained all the remaining CHADIC languages. As indicated by this grouping, a group 9 language such as Dangla was assumed to be more closely related to a group 1 language such as Hausa than it would be to a Biu-Mandara language such as Margi or Tera. This seemingly reasonable assumption turns out, however, to be extremely difficult to back up with solid supporting evidence. A careful look at the similarities that are so easy to spot between a group 9 language and a group 1 language (Dangla and Hausa, for ex-

(13) "Zeitschrift für Eingeborenen-Sprachen" 28 (1937-1938) pp. 286-299.

ample) reveals that all of these similarities — whether in phonology, vocabulary, pronominal paradigms, or gender marking system — concern features that are almost certainly retentions from Proto-CHADIC. So far it has not been possible to identify a single clear-cut case of a shared innovation that would allow one to treat groups 1 and 9 as a real unit on a par with Biu-Mandara. The use of lexical counts equally fails to justify the inclusion of groups 1 and 9 in the same branch. If one casually compares a word list of Dangla<sup>(14)</sup>, for example, with a Hausa word list, the number of cognates that one sees seems greater than is the case when comparing a Dangla list with a list from a Biu-Mandara language such as Tera. But when one actually sits down and counts cognates, one discovers, surprisingly, that the percentage of cognates found between Dangla and group 1 languages is not appreciably different from the percentage found in identical lists between Dangla and Biu-Mandara languages. Compare the following figures based on a modified Swadesh basic word list:

Group 9 (Dangla)	Group 1		Group 9 (Dangla)	Biu-Mandara	
Dangla	Hausa	19%	Dangla	Tera	20%
Dangla	Ngizim	24%	Dangla	Gisiga	22%
Dangla	Kanakuru	18%	Dangla	Kotoko	18%

Taking all factors into account, I think that we are forced to separate Greenberg's group 9 from Plateau-Sahel and treat it as a third co-ordinate branch within CHADIC. This is not to say that the notion of a combined Plateau-Sahel containing groups 1 and 9 is necessarily wrong; but we cannot ignore the implications of our inability to verify its existence. Until new evidence is forthcoming, I would suggest that the analysis of CHADIC into three co-ordinate branches is the only justifiable working hypothesis.

As far as nomenclature for the separate branches is concerned there seem to be two options. One could follow informal usage and refer to the branches as West (Hausa, Bole, Bade etc.), Central (Margi, Mandara, Kotoko etc.) and East (Mubi, Dangla, Nancere etc.). Alternatively, if one preferred to retain the terms Plateau-Sahel and Biu-Mandara, which have gained a certain currency in the literature, one could keep Biu-Mandara as is, restrict Plateau-Sahel to West Chadic, and then coin a new term, for the East Chadic branch. In any case, we can be sure that "Chado-Hamitic" will not enter in the picture.

In closing let me reiterate the point that rejection of the term "Chado-Hamitic" is not a matter of personal taste but rather is a natural consequence of new

(14) The Dangla word list has been drawn from J. Fédry, et al., *Dictionnaire Dangléat*, "Afrique et Langage", Lyon, 1971.

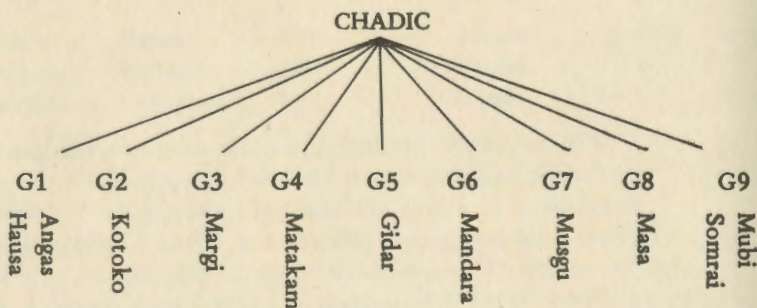
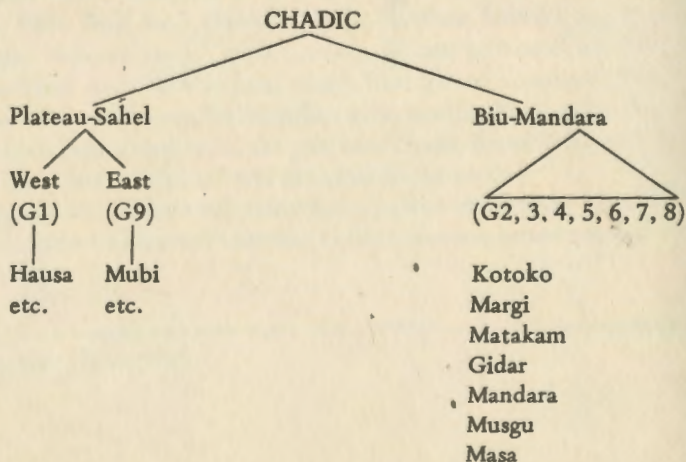
developments and new thoughts about classification in the CHADIC field. When the "Chado-Hamitic" concept was first introduced in the 1930's, it served an important function. It served to rescue Hausa from its isolated status and place it among its true sister languages, and it served to draw the attention of the Hamito-Semitic comparativist to the neglected languages of the Lake Chad area. "Chado-Hamitic" along with "Chadic" also provided an initial basis for the classification and subclassification of the numerous languages found in this linguistically complex area. But over the years as our knowledge of the area has increased so the usefulness of the term has decreased, to the point where "Chado-Hamitic" is now a meaningless term that can no longer claim a legitimate place in African linguistic scholarship.



## APPENDIX

Developments in CHADIC Classification  
in Diagrammatic Form1. *The Handbook Classification* (Lukas)

Non-Class	Chado-Hamitic	Chadic	Somrai Group
Angas Ron	Hausa, Bade Kotoko, Musgu Mubi	Mandara Tera Margi	Somrai Nancere

2. *Greenberg Classification*3. *Newman and Ma Classification* (as expanded by Hoffmann)



## 4. Newman Classification (1974)

